



## GOVERNOR CALLS FOR PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS CRITICAL PROBLEMS IN STATE PRISONS

*Speaking at the California District Attorney's Summer Conference today in Newport Beach, Governor Schwarzenegger will call for a special session of the Legislature to address California's critical problems of recidivism and prison overcrowding, and will introduce proposals to improve the state's correctional system: building new prisons and local jail facilities, moving female prisoners into community-based correctional facilities, and streamlining the state's procurement and construction processes.*

*This is the second stage of the Governor's work to reform California's prisons. In 2004 Governor Schwarzenegger appointed former Governor George Deukmejian to chair an independent commission on prison reform, and then led the passage of legislation to reorganize the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).*

*The Governor's current proposals address the inadequate prison facilities and high return-to-custody rates that have led to dangerous conditions in California's prisons. He advocated reforms previously in his Strategic Growth Plan and proposed 2006-2007 budget; the special session will give the Governor the opportunity to press for passage of these important measures.*

*At 11 a.m. Governor Schwarzenegger's remarks will be Web cast live at <http://www.gov.ca.gov/>.*

### **Prison Populations and Recidivism**

California's prison problems are tied directly to recidivism and overcrowding. When parolees commit crimes, they not only burden the state's overtaxed prison system—they create new victims and compromise public safety. California's recidivism rate is, at 70 percent, the nation's highest. The Governor knows that we cannot fix our prisons without reducing recidivism, and we cannot reduce recidivism without creating more space and programs for prisoners. Two of his proposals address these problems, with the goal of increasing public safety.

#### **Move non-violent female offenders to community correctional facilities**

- In his January budget the Governor called for CDCR to move 4,500 non-serious, non-violent female prisoners—approximately 40 percent of incarcerated women in California—from state prisons into community correctional facilities just prior to their release. He will reintroduce this proposal in the special session.
  - Male inmates will be housed in the facilities made available by this proposal, decreasing crisis-level overcrowding in men's facilities.
- Inmates will be housed in facilities near to where their children and families live, and will receive gender-responsive counseling and services to improve their chances for successful re-entry into their communities.
  - Research shows that these measures lower recidivism rates and enhance family reunification; increase drug and alcohol abuse recovery; and significantly stabilize women's transition to life outside of prison.

- While housed in community correctional facilities, inmates will be connected to local law enforcement and social service providers prior to release, permitting parole officers and counselors to conduct more comprehensive monitoring of parolees.
- These are secure facilities, staffed by CDCR correctional officers, who will provide 24-hour correctional coverage.

#### **Create secure parole re-entry facilities**

- The Governor will introduce a proposal to create secure parole re-entry facilities to house inmates for a transitional period before they are released from prison.
- These facilities will focus on reducing recidivism by providing inmates with mental health, drug and alcohol, life skills, and professional counseling prior to their release. Currently, prisoners receive almost no preparation for release, increasing the likelihood that they will violate parole, commit crimes, and create more victims.
- Inmates will be placed in facilities near to communities where they will be paroled, allowing CDCR to connect inmates with local law enforcement and social service providers. This will allow law enforcement to more closely monitor parolees, and swiftly identify violators for revocation and prosecution.
- Secure parole re-entry facilities have 24-hour confinement, secure perimeters, and no in or out privileges.

#### **Overcrowding and Infrastructure**

California has only authorized and built one prison over the past 10 years, and today more than 16,000 prisoners are housed in gymnasiums, day-rooms and other unsafe and overcrowded spaces. CDCR reports that it cannot house inmates after June 2007 unless the state takes immediate action. The Governor has called for two proposals to address inadequate, outdated correctional facilities.

#### **Construct new prisons and fix aging infrastructure throughout the system**

- The Governor will propose the construction of two new state prisons to accommodate thousands of additional inmates, and using lease-revenue bonds to fund these projects.
  - Governor Schwarzenegger included new prisons in his January 2005 Strategic Growth Plan; the special session provides legislators and the Governor another opportunity to carefully evaluate and fund the state's prison infrastructure needs.
- He is also calling for infrastructure improvements and capital outlay throughout the correctional system, including upgrades to power, water, and wastewater systems and building new spaces to house prison administrative, health care, and support services.
  - Lack of space currently makes it difficult to provide comprehensive in-prison programs for inmates.
- Increasing prison space is not enough. The safety of prisoners and employees, and the ability of prisons to offer rehabilitative programs, depend on safe staffing levels. California needs more correctional officers and high-quality officer training.

#### **Expedite processes so construction can begin quickly and efficiently**

- Governor Schwarzenegger's fourth proposal will allow the state to streamline its procurement and construction processes, expediting proposed prison construction and the establishment secure parole re-entry facilities.
- The special session will allow the Legislature to specify how, precisely, bidding and procurement should be modified in the face of current emergency conditions. All options will be explored, and

may include changes such as modifying CEQA requirements, or authorizing bond funding by program rather than by project.